
Ensuring the Documentary Heritage of the Centennial State: 2000 - 2005

The Draft Strategic Plan Of The Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board

1313 Sherman Street, Room 1B-20, Denver, CO 80203
Phone- 303/866-3661
Fax- 303/866-2257

Introduction:

In 1982, the Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board (CHRAB) issued an assessment report about the condition of historical records in the state. The report was called *Colorado Records Survey* and included were recommendations to records custodians on the management and preservation of public and historical records. In 1994, the CHRAB began a project to update that earlier effort, and the plan described below provides a new direction for the Board as it seeks to fulfill its position as Colorado's "central advisory body" for historical record issues.

About Colorado's Historical Records Advisory Board

The Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board came into existence in 1976 to serve as a state affiliate to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). It is one of fifty-six similar boards active in all states and territories, as well as the District of Columbia. The Governor of Colorado appoints at least nine members to the Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board to serve three year terms. Additionally, the Governor designates a State Coordinator for the Board who must be a full-time official in charge of either the Colorado Historical Society or the Colorado State Archives. The official not chosen as coordinator serves as a member of the Board.

A majority of board members must have recognized professional experience in the administration of historical records or in a field of research that makes use of such records. The remainder of the Board should include persons demographically representative of Colorado and committed to the preservation of the state's documentary heritage.

The responsibilities of the CHRAB

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission intends state historical records advisory boards to serve two primary roles. First, the Board acts as a liaison between the state and the Commission. In doing so, it reviews grant proposals of state or local scope submitted to the NHPRC for funding support. Second, the Board serves as Colorado's central historical records planning advisory body, for Commission-funded projects within the state, and provides coordination among historical records repositories and other information agencies. NHPRC mandates strategic planning as a primary function of state boards.

Since its last assessment, the CHRAB has been instrumental in securing \$598, 810 in NHPRC grant funding for Colorado historical records programs. It has also offered workshops on the management of historical materials to library and archives staff across the state. For example, the NHPRC funded a Denver Museum of Natural History project to preserve its historical collection of Alaska ethnographic images.

Our 2000 Plan

This is a draft version of the Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board's strategic plan. The plan outlines Board priorities for preserving of Colorado's historical records, establishing beneficial alliances with related organizations, and delineating the Board's own role in the records community. It includes the Board's vision, mission, goals, objectives, and strategies for the next five years.

In drafting this plan, the Board assessed, through surveys and personal field contacts, the record programs of local government agencies, and the historical record programs of both public and private historical repositories. The information was used to identify action steps that the CHRAB must take in order to serve the needs of its constituents and the NHPRC. For the plan to succeed the Board must work in conjunction with other Colorado institutions and organizations.

The CHRAB will later use the information to define another important element of its plan: grant funding priorities for 2000 - 2005. These priorities will serve as a basis for the solicitation of future proposals and guide the CHRAB in rating grant requests to the NHPRC from Colorado institutions and organizations. This represents a significant departure from previous review activities.

Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board Members

- Joel Barker, National Archives & Records Administration, Rocky Mountain Region
 - Charles Batey, Denver Public Library
 - Georgianna Contiguglia, Colorado Historical Society
 - John Dale, Retired Educator
 - Eleanor Gehres, Denver Public Library
 - James Hansen, Colorado State University
 - Terry Ketelsen, Coordinator Colorado State Archives
 - Rick Manzaneres, Fort Garland Museum
 - Allen Nossaman, San Juan County and San Juan Historical Society
 - Deborah Saito, Archives Consultant
 - Robin Theobald, Businessman/Historian
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Statement of the CHRAB's Strategic Direction

Vision

To be effective the CHRAB must encourage all users to access historical information. We must find technologies, techniques and partners that can improve service and efficiency; and we must assist all repositories in expanding, continuously, their capability to meet basic and ideal expectations.

Mission

The CHRAB will ensure understanding of our state's past by supporting, statewide, efforts to identify, preserve, and promote access to essential historical documentation.

Goals

In support of its mission and vision, the CHRAB has defined the following three general goals:

1. Advocate the preservation of and access to Colorado's historically important records.
2. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CHRAB and improve the quality of service provided to constituents.

3. Establish a "Super Board" of organizations interested in the preservation of historical records.

The Plan

Issue: Insufficient professional knowledge and training are negatively affecting the preservation of Colorado's historical records.

Remarks:

- ❑ Staffs in many public and private historical repositories lack sufficient professional knowledge to perform their duties as curators and archivists -- often because the organizations cannot afford to hire professionally trained personnel. In some cases, a repository's governing board does not fully understand the various aspects of managing a historical records program. Without proper planning or management, historical documents sit unprocessed in basements, closets, and sheds. Or, if processed, they may remain unused for want of adequate publicity.
- ❑ Staff members responsible for historical documents need training in collections management, preservation, arrangement and description practices, storage and handling practices, and disaster planning and implementation. Likewise, staff in local and state government agencies who are responsible for protecting Colorado's public records need similar training. For them additional emphasis should be given to developing records retention schedules, and managing paper files and electronic records. Upper management at both private organizations and public agencies need to be taught the value of historical records and what must be done to preserve and make them accessible to the public.
- ❑ Electronic records are quickly becoming the format for public records. At all levels of government across the state, and even in historical repositories, electronic technology systems are perceived as cure-alls to records program ills. However, there is little awareness of what is required to maintain the software programs and hardware involved. There is even less awareness of preservation and access issues involved with the electronic records already in place and those being created daily.

Goal 1: Advocate the preservation of and access to all of Colorado's historically important records.

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
1. Adopt basic collections management guidelines.	1) Determine which guidelines to recommend and draft text.	2001
Encourage program planning and management by all historical records repositories. Ultimately, however, organizations and	2) Solicit review of guidelines from professional	2001

agencies must assume basic responsibility for their own programs.

organizations.

- 3) Revise and disseminate guidelines to historical records repositories. 2001

2. Reaffirm the CHRAB's commitment to traditional records.

Educate historical records custodians on the basic techniques of properly preserving and managing their collections

- 1) Work with the NHPRC and other SHRABs to gain knowledge of programs across the country. On-going
- 2) Seek NHPRC funds to train records repository staff in overall management of historical records, particularly collections management and preservation.
- 3) Sponsor workshops on how to identify, preserve, arrange, describe, and make accessible historical records in all private and public repositories. 2001 to 2005
- 4) Seek re-grant funds to help local repositories improve their records programs.
- 5) Continue to recommend NHPRC funding of worthy Colorado projects. On-going

3. Utilize electronic technology.

Provide information about how this technology is being used by Colorado repositories and promote appropriate education and standards.

- 1) Assemble list of repositories with World Wide Web sites across the state and their Universal Resource Locator (URL). Ongoing, initial work started with survey
- 2) Create an Internet directory of Colorado's 2000

historical repositories.

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| 3) Identify actions other SHRABs and government agencies are taking. | On-going |
| 4) Sponsor and attend electronic records workshops. | 2001 to 2005 |
| 5) Form teams with knowledgeable partners to solicit technical exchange of information. | 2001 |
| 6) Conduct a special survey of electronic record creators and keepers in Colorado. | 2001 |

<i>Resources:</i>	Significant staff time; additional resources will be required for training; minimal expenses for printing and postage of guidelines.
<i>Responsibility (objective. #3):</i>	The CHRAB members and staff with assistance from information technology partners.
<i>Responsibility (all others):</i>	The CHRAB and staff.

Issue: Significant changes in the Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board's administration are necessary to ensure proper implementation of this plan and quality service to constituents.

Remarks:

- ❑ The CHRAB recognizes that there is a need for a full-time, regular staff person to meet its strategic objectives. Board members are essentially volunteers, having limited time to devote to the CHRAB activities. In order for this new plan to succeed, projects must be coordinated and properly managed.
- ❑ In order for the CHRAB to fulfill its mission and statutory responsibility, a thorough review of its bylaws is necessary. In practice, the CHRAB no longer functions according to the guidelines, which were last revised in 1986, and it must devise new ones to function effectively.
- ❑ The Board needs to gain greater visibility among Colorado's historical records groups. With greater visibility, the CHRAB can attract more organizational partners, more support for its activities, and more participation in the NHPRC's grant program.

Goal 2: Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CHRAB and improve the quality of service provided to constituents.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
1. Establish a regular professional position. A regular staff person will help the CHRAB to implement its goals, maintain contact with constituents, and ensure continuity of Board activities.	1) Define the position by writing a job description. 2) Acquire seed money to institute position for initial 3-year period. 3) Obtain permanent funding for the position based on successful evaluation of first three years.	
2. Improve the CHRAB's administrative performance. The CHRAB must operate in accordance with policy statements.	1) Revise the CHRAB's bylaws in keeping with current board practices. 2) Re-evaluate the Board's priorities in light of its most recent assessment. 3) Develop a member orientation and a year-end self-evaluation mechanism to assess the CHRAB's action plan, statement of priorities, and grant funding priorities.	2000 On-going 2001
3. Heighten the CHRAB's visibility. To make the public and constituents aware of the Board's existence and mission.	1) Update the Board's brochure to include its mission and new grant funding priorities and distribute at every available opportunity. 2) Establish and maintain an Internet presence. 3) Promote the work of the Board through press releases and organizational contacts. 4) Disseminate survey highlights to interested individuals and groups.	2000 - 2005 2000 - 2005 2000 - 2005 2000

Resources: The CHRAB time, and minimal expenses.

Responsibility: The CHRAB.

Issue: Members of private and public historical and informational organizations do not communicate or coordinate their activities with each other.

Remarks:

- ❑ The insular nature of Colorado's historical records and informational organizations makes it difficult for professionals and interested persons to participate in a variety of activities. Typically, organizations plan only a year ahead and with little thought of how scheduled activities might conflict with the schedules of similar groups. Furthermore, interactions among these groups take place on a limited basis. Typically, one group does not know what the other is doing.
- ❑ The CHRAB's assessment has underscored the need for coordination among members of the historical records community. There is a need for representatives of these groups to come together and address the common issues (such as identification, preservation, training, and access) that affect their programs, and to identify common goals for future program development. By forming beneficial alliances, Colorado's historical and informational records community can enhance their service to the public.
- ❑ The Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board needs to take a leadership role in establishing and maintaining such a partnership, for in so doing we will gain a better understanding of our own constituents and fulfill our statutory responsibilities. Alone, the Board cannot satisfactorily address all the issues affecting archival and records management programs.

Goal 3: Establish and maintain a "Super Board" of organizations interested in preserving historical records.

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
1. Develop professional partnerships for shared mutual understanding and support. The CHRAB needs to form strong partnerships with public and private historical records repositories, libraries, museums, local government agencies, and information organizations across the state.	1) Identify and contact potential statewide partners. 2) Obtain a planning grant for three Super Board meetings (organizational, follow-up, and evaluation). 3) Convene group, identify common goals, and schedule a planning session. 4) Convene Super Board meeting and plan two-year common calendar of events	2000 - 2005 2001 January 2001 (or after receipt of grant) 2001

- 5) Create and maintain a Super Board WWW page with links to the CHRAB and participating organizations. 2002 - 2005

Resources: The CHRAB (w/staff) time, additional funding will be required.

Responsibility: The CHRAB members and staff.

The CHRAB funding priorities [to be defined after sufficient public input]

Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board will use the priorities in rating grant proposals from Colorado institutions and organizations seeking National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) funding.